

**REMARKS**

At the outset, the Examiner is thanked for the thorough review and consideration of the pending application. The Office Action dated April 18, 2006 has been received and its contents carefully reviewed.

Claims 1, 2, 6-14, 19, and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003-0205333 to Hayafuji et al. Claims 1-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 2000-284295 to Satoshi et al. in view of U.S. Patent 6,092,578 to Machida et al. and 3,769,132 to Cram et al. Claims 16-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Satoshi and Machida in view of U.S. Patent 5,324,053 to Kubota.

The rejection of claim 1-20 is respectfully traversed and reconsideration is requested. Since Hayafuji et al. was filed on March 12, 2003 with the USPTO after the foreign priority date (November 18, 2002) of the present invention, Applicant submits that Hayafuji et al. is not available as prior art against the present invention. Therefore, Applicant requests that the Examiner's rejection based on Hayafuji et al. be withdrawn.

Claims 1-20 are allowable over the cited references in that each of these claims recites a combination of elements including, for example, "an upper stage fixed to the upper chamber unit for securing a first substrate, a lower stage fixed to the lower chamber unit for securing a second substrate; and a plurality of elastic members arranged between the upper and lower chamber units and the upper and lower stages" as recited in claim 1. None of the cited references including Satoshi, Machida, Cram, Kubota, singly or in combination, teaches or suggests at least this feature of the claimed invention.

Applicants believe the foregoing amendments place the application in condition for allowance and early, favorable action is respectfully solicited.

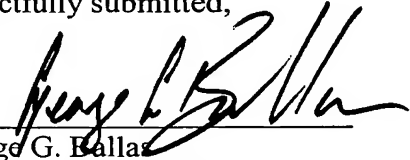
If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned attorney at (202) 496-7500 to discuss the steps necessary for placing the application in condition for allowance. All correspondence should continue to be sent to the below-listed address.

If these papers are not considered timely filed by the Patent and Trademark Office, then a petition is hereby made under 37 C.F.R. §1.136, and any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 for any necessary extension of time, or any other fees required to complete the filing of this response, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0911. Please credit any overpayment to deposit Account No. 50-0911. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

Dated: July 17, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

By

  
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